



Where History Comes Alive

BATTLESHIP NORTH CAROLINA

# Scuttlebutt

December 2009

## December Highlights

December 5th and 6th: The Living History Crew returns for the weekend to interpret the Battleship. It's a great opportunity to see and learn in more detail the workings of the Battleship during WWII. The living history interpreters will be in their stations on Saturday from 8AM to 5PM.

December 6th and 7th: The Azalea Coast Amateur Radio Club will host a world wide HAM radio operator event aboard the Battleship. The event begins at 7:00pm EST on Sunday, December 6, which is 0000 hours, December 7 UTC (Universal Time Coordinated) and continues through the night ending at noon EST on Monday, Decem-

ber 7. Contact for the event is club member Bill Morine, 910-367-1758.

Using the ship's original transmitter, receiver and antennas, the club members will provide an opportunity for HAM radio operators to contact the battleship and, in return, receive a special postcard verifying the contact.

Holiday lighting of the Ship throughout the month.

**Christmas Day, December 25th: Battleship opens at Noon.**

## Where was the Battleship on Christmas?

1941—Hampton Roads, VA

1942—Noumea, New Caledonia (South Pacific)

1943—Underway from Efate, New Hebrides (South Pacific)

1944—Anchored in Ulithi (South Pacific)

1945—New York City

1946—Anchored in Brooklyn Navy Yard



## Refueling at Sea by Paula Curtis-Burn

On December 19<sup>th</sup>, most of us are finishing our shopping lists for Christmas, attending parties and church and school programs, wrapping gifts and planning for family to be together. But on that day in 1942 aboard the Battleship, the smoking lamp was out and the deckhands were busy rigging the lines to refuel the *Nicholas* (DD449) on one side and the *Farragut* (DD 348) on the other. The U.S. Navy had a rule: "The Navy never goes to sea without a full load of fuel." While the battleships could carry an extra two million gallons of fuel, the destroyers needed to top off their tanks every four to five days. Most ships preferred to

top them off every three to four days to be safe. BB55 could top off four to five "tin cans" per fueling by placing ships on both port and starboard sides.

Refueling was a dangerous operation requiring all ships to maintain a constant course and speed of 10 to 15 knots. They had to keep a distance of 30 to 60 feet between the ships. According to the website, *Dirty Little Secrets of WWII*, this was an elaborate ballet that surprised and impressed foreign naval officers. Of course, danger was lurking from enemy subs and the destroyers waiting for fuel or already refueled formed a screen for protec-

tion. The next ship in line for fuel was the "lifeguard" in case a man went overboard.

At the start of the war, the Navy's logistical support was a slender thread but the war in the Pacific forced the Navy to acquire a number of various types of ships to carry stores, munitions and fuel. These floating service squadrons, known as "Servrons," provided for the task force's logistical needs. Servron 8, for example, had 62 ships including escorts, in 1943. By 1944 there were 430 ships, including one or two carriers to provide protection for the precious stores.

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### Fueling at Sea continued

On BB55, there was a tight-knit group called the "Oil Kings." They were responsible for fueling the Battleship and the destroyers while underway and ran tests on the fuel oil and boiler water. William Fleishman, PF Division, was a member of this elite team of seven men. They served under a Chief Petty Officer who, according to Bill, was a "hands-off" kind of guy.

Refueling wasn't a routine process. On December 19, 1942, one of the destroyers being refueled pulled out too soon bursting the hose and covering the deck with Bunker C fuel oil. One of the deckhands was covered head to toe.

Refueling often became a festive occasion on deck. The Battleship's band played while ice cream was passed to the smaller ships. In exchange the Battleship received movies, mail, and supplies. BB55 became so proficient in fueling other ships at sea that she received a commendation in

July of 1943 for efficiency and speed.

Refueling at sea dates to October 1916 when sailors aboard the USS MAUMEE came up with the idea but had no chance to test it until the war began in April of 1917. The United States wanted to send destroyers to our British Allies to help combat German submarines, but the destroyers were unable to carry enough fuel to cross the Atlantic. To remedy this problem, the MAUMEE was stationed 300 miles south of Greenland as a mobile refueling base (probably supplying coal) and sent the destroyers on to Ireland. The conditions provided the perfect training ground for refueling, with strong winds and high seas. Sometimes conditions were so bad, only one ship could be refueled on the lee side.

During the winter of 1938-1939, Task Force 7 was set up on the west coast to train in fueling all kinds of ships while at sea. The men from Damage

Control were required to observe refueling to be able to combat problems that might arise. The British destroyers especially had a reputation for popping the fuel lines and requiring special clean up.

Once aboard the BB-55, the USS ALASKA was being fueled on the starboard side, with a second destroyer on the port. All of a sudden there was a Japanese air attack forcing the deckhands to chop the ropes and oil hoses to unhook the three ships. Refueling was dangerous even when the ships pulled many miles away from the combat zone.

The crew of the Battleship spent their 1942 Christmas moored at Dumbea Bay, Noumea, New Caledonia, far from family and loved ones.

*Sources: crew memories from the Battleship archives, the magazine "Surface Warfare," March / April 1999, and the website "Dirty Little Secrets of WWII."*



BB55 alongside the  
AO47 USS NECHES,  
November 30, 1944

### Christmas Memories—In Their Own Words

"Christmas of 1944 found us involved in the Philippines campaign. I cannot remember much about the decorations but the holiday meal so far from home was remarkably authentic. Three of the most memorable gifts I received that Christmas was a can of milk chocolate from home which had gone stale and turned white, it did not ravel well at all in those days; a beautiful gold pen knife from my wife Barbara for censoring mail (I was very effusive in my thanks in a letter home which she kept); and a gift from the Womens' Society for Christian Service from our Methodist Church back home. I opened my gift. It was a first aid kit! Such a morale builder but the ladies were

thinking like Moms, we supposed. We blessed them anyway."

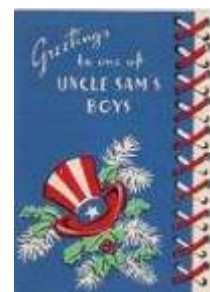
*Capt. Tracy Wilder, USN, Ret. (Reported onboard BB55 in August 1944.)*

"The only holiday observed at sea was Christmas and Thanksgiving. The way one could tell it was a holiday was that we were served turkey and ham. When in port in Noumea, New Caledonia, one Christmas in 1943 we had what is called a "smoker." That's Navy lingo for a sporting event...boxing, wrestling, line heaving etc. held in competition between divisions."

*Leo Drake (1916-2008) in the heaving line contest, right*

"Christmas was undoubtedly the loneliness times for many of the crew. Some men would receive decorations and trinkets from home but they were not allowed to display them for security reasons, like fire. But the ship had a large stowage of decorations and they were distributed to areas deemed safe. In our office [Executive Officer's Office] decoration was left to each man with the only restraint that it not obstruct free movement. I opted to post in the passageway a beautiful card that my Mom sent. Someone pinned a holly and red bulb piece to the bulletin board.

*Gordon Knapp (Reported onboard BB55 in October 1945.)*



### Holiday Gift Ideas from the Battleship

This year drop by the Battleship Store to find items for men, women and children on your shopping list. We carry clothing, glassware and mugs, household accessories, games, books, jewelry, music, magnets and so much more. The store can be reached: 910-251-5797 ext. 3008



Military patches, bumper stickers, key chains, ball caps and more!



Many books to choose from and a huge selection of t-shirts for all ages





## Battleship Receives \$5000 from Time Warner Cable

In April 2009, Time Warner Cable (TWC) announced its largest ever charitable commitment: \$100 million in cash and in-kind over five years to inspire students to pursue science and technology education and careers. Through an initiative called *Connect a Million Minds*, TWC hopes to connect young people to hands-on learning opportunities in science, technology, engineering and math so that they are prepared to solve the economic, environmental and community challenges of the future. The need to engage students in these fields is real. 80% of jobs created in the next decade will require math and science skills, but interest in these subjects is declining.

TWC kicked off the *Connect A Million Minds* initiative in November with events nation-

wide. Four cities in North Carolina were selected. In Wilmington, TWC Public Affairs Manager Andi Curtis chose to work with Cape Fear Segways, the Marine Quest Program at UNC Wilmington and the Battleship. Andi cited the Battleship as "the engineering wonder in our own backyard."

The Wilmington team chose gyroscopes as the unifying theme since gyroscopic properties are the driving force behind segways. Students from the Girl Scouts, 4-H, and Science Olympiad spent an afternoon enjoying segways, operating remote operated vehicles (use gyroscopes in navigation) in the Cape Fear River, and then coming to the Battleship.

Volunteer Frank Glossl provided an overview of the use

of gyroscopes in keeping the guns on target in spite of the ship's movement. Volunteer Kirk Binning (shown below) and Museum Services' Director Kim Sincox talked to students about the advantages of the master gyroscopes in navigation and the complexities of using magnetic compasses.

The evening concluded with dinner in the mess decks where TWC presented \$5,000 checks to the participating organizations for the ongoing development of STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) programs for young people. It was a great experience working with Andi and the marvelous team she assembled. We look forward to our ongoing partnership with Time Warner Cable.

Learn More:

[www.connectamillionminds.com](http://www.connectamillionminds.com)

"Time Warner Cable's charitable giving has always strived to connect students to quality education opportunities. Connect a Million Minds focuses Time Warner Cable's resources on a critical education issue facing our country. It was encouraging to see how the visiting students reacted to the tour and gyroscope lessons on board. We look forward to bringing more students to the Battleship over the next five years."



**Business Office:** Director: Capt. Terry Bragg, USN (Ret.)  
Maintenance Director: Roger Miller; Comptroller: Elizabeth Rollinson  
Brooke Laton, Candy Edwards, Kim Mintz

**Maintenance:** Robert Hall, Terry Kuhn, Steve Lewis, Phil Southworth, Gary Pietak, Jason Boyd

**Museum:** Kim Sincox, Mary Ames Booker

**Programs:** Danielle Wallace, Shelly Robinson, Christine Jamet, Julia Yannetti

**Promotions:** Heather Loftin

**Ship's Store:** Leesa McFarlane, Cathy Shipman, Devin Buie, Tara Banks, Sabrina Porter, Joy Lynch, Joanna Zazzali

**Night Watchmen:** Danny Bradshaw, Bill Parr, Brian Gibson

**Webmaster:** Randy Drew

Battleship NORTH CAROLINA, PO Box 480, Wilmington, NC 28402; 910-251-5797; [www.battleshipnc.com](http://www.battleshipnc.com)



## Enlist Today!

Friends of the Battleship NORTH CAROLINA is a non-profit organization whose funds support exhibits, interpretation, educational programs, artifact acquisition, and restoration projects. Projects include:

- Purchase of an 1827 painting of the Ship of the Line NORTH CAROLINA by Nicholas Cammillieri
- Restoration of a rare 26 foot U.S. Navy Motor Whaleboat
- Commission of models of the submarine NORTH CAROLINA and the Confederate ironclad NORTH CAROLINA with custom display cases
- Display mounts and artwork for the SSN-777 exhibit
- Exhibit hall window banners

The Battleship NORTH CAROLINA receives no funding from federal, state or local governments for its operations. The Ship is maintained through revenue generated from admissions, museum store sales, rentals, programming, and Friends memberships.

### Membership Levels

**Lieutenant (jg), Individual** 35.00

**Lieutenant, 2 Individuals** 45.00

**Lt. Commander** 75.00

Parents and children under 18 years of age or grandparents and grandchildren under 18 years of age

**Commander** 150.00

Lt. Commander benefits plus five guest passes

**Captain** 300.00

Lt. Commander benefits plus 10 guest passes

**Commodore** 500.00

Recognition signage in the Visitors Center and 25 guest passes

**Admiral** 1,000.00 (call for details)

**Benefits include:** Free Admission for One Year; 10% discount in the Ship's Store; Discounts on special programs/tours; Monthly newsletter, *Scuttlebutt*

### To Enlist:

Print this form and send with check payable to the Friends of the Battleship NORTH CAROLINA or call 910-251-5797 with your Visa or Mastercard information

Name:

Address:

City/State:

E-Mail Address:

Phone:

Enlistment Level: